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SOME RECENT WORKS ON SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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Systematic theology in its classic form is at once a philosophy of religion, a philosophy of history, and a world-view. It sums up in its master mind, St. Thomas Aquinas, the knowledge of its age. A great picture it is—none greater was ever conceived; indeed, for completeness, for dramatic movement, and for religious interest, none has ever remotely rivalled it. The great epics of Hinduism and the world-views of Buddhism and Islam fall far short in power and unity, in scientific grasp and form, in philosophic insight and in moral purpose; while the modern world has nothing which can be put in comparison, for our world-view is incomplete, discordant, perplexed with doubts, nor has it come to an understanding with the religious and ethical nature of man.

What forces went into the formation of the masterpiece, scholars well know; but we cannot so much as name them here, nor shall we attempt to discriminate and to determine how far it represented primitive Christianity. It was the growth of a thousand years, and, completed, it had centuries for its own; science and philosophy, literature and music and art, were its hand-maidens, and it ruled them rigidly. Not even the Protestant Reformation could disturb its sway, for only details were in issue, and the world-view remained undisturbed; indeed, its dominion was extended as common men were thenceforth instructed in its outlines.

Francis L. Patton, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, 1906 (copyright, 1875).

Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology*, seventh edition, 1902; eighth, 1907.

William Newton Clarke, *An Outline of Christian Theology*, 1898.

Clarence Augustine Beckwith, *Realities of Christian Theology*, 1906.

William Adams Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 1906.

George Burman Foster, *The Finality of the Christian Religion*, 1906.

Dante once for all gave it immortal form, Milton carried it wherever the English tongue was spoken, and Bunyan made its rudiments as household words. Thus it entered into the minds of the people, fitting well enough the naïve cosmology derived from the senses and their interpretation of the Bible, since its science is the simple knowledge of the common man.

But the completeness and absoluteness of the system proved its undoing. How great the revolution between the thirteenth century and our own, between the seventeenth century and our own! Moreover, so much was unnecessary, since already in the sixteenth century men were quick to see that Galileo's doctrine undermined the system. What of its history, of its cosmology, even of its dramatization of the incarnation—he descended from above; he ascended into heaven; he sitteth at the right hand of God, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead? We shall not dwell upon the story, but Melanchthon and Bellarmine were right, the assertion of the truth of the Copernican hypothesis was the denial of theology.

How far we have come in these last four hundred years! What item of the knowledge of the thirteenth century now remains in philosophy, logic, history, natural science? Moreover, the new knowledge is widely extended in its influence, displacing the old even with uneducated folk. No Bunyan indeed has arisen to popularize it, but it is the commonplace of our schools and magazines and newspapers, and is embodied in the appliances which contribute to our modern civilization. The old learning is not disproved but forgotten. Theology alone of the mediaeval sciences remains still in its mediaeval form, with the same style of argumentation, the same framework and categories, the same material in largest part, and the identical illustrations. Only in points here and there has it been retouched, for theology has been identified with the truth—the truth about God necessary to men's salvation—and religion has been identified with creed, and thus a sacred conservatism has protected the system, and men given to its study have deemed it the holy place of the Most High. We are slow to think our concepts together, and nowhere so slow as here, while to keep differing forms of thinking separate, to be of the thirteenth and the twentieth century simultaneously or alter-

nately, is part of the fortunate inconsistency of mind which makes at once transition and continuity possible, which makes a progressive society possible.

A review of recent books of theology suggests this line of thought. Our list is taken only from representatives of the evangelical churches in the United States, and has none upon it whose author is not in regular standing in his communion; yet how various the attitudes, and how widely different the degrees of consciousness of the conflict of world-views! The study is interesting as an investigation into the manners and ways of the theological mind.

Modern text-books of Roman Catholic theology avow at once their adherence to the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, as indeed they must since the encyclical of Leo XIII, "Aeterni Patris," August 4, 1879. In the same spirit certain Protestant theologians with equal confidence maintain the scheme of the seventeenth century scholasticism; and it is to be noted that the world-view of the seventeenth century scholastics differed not at all from that of the "Angelical Doctor." One might compare profitably the *Manual of Catholic Theology* by George Wilhelm and Thomas B. Scannell (1906) with the work of Dr. Strong to see how closely the two resemble each other. They are of the same school, and the advantage on disputed points is in doubt.

In our first group are men who permit the modern view to exercise no influence upon their theology, and for substance of doctrine the papal encyclical against Modernism would trouble them not at all. President Patton in a brief manual sums up his conclusions; a very few quotations will show his point of view. Theology is for him still queen of the sciences, and its acceptance the most important of intellectual acts, and this because of its utility. "The most important truth to every man is that which makes known the conditions of a happy hereafter. 'The doctrines' claim a position above all other truth because of their practical value" (p. 5); and this view is set forth in the ancient forms: "Entering heaven, the weary find rest, the wanderer a home, and the pilgrim leaves his tent for a city that hath foundations. Earth's sinning Christians shall wear white robes. Earth's sorrowing disciples shall waken notes of joy from harps of gold" (p. 116). Crit-

ical views as to the historicity of the Biblical narratives and as to the composition of the text are simply denied: "The historic credibility of the Bible is a settled question. The books of Moses were written by Moses. The Gospels are genuine biographies, and were written by the men whose names they bear. What is true of the Pentateuch and of the Gospels is true of all the other books of the Bible" (p. 25). "All the parts of the Old Testament are put on the same level. No difference of rank or value is recognized" (p. 27), and, in short, all "the Bible is infallible" (p. 26). We are descended from Adam and inherit his guilt (p. 36). And our relationship to God is primarily that of the criminal to the judge, for the saving act is not moral, nor is it pardon, but it is directly forensic. Christ has paid our penalty so that we owe nothing and are free (p. 59 ff.). God is understood and his existence proved in the ancient way, and Paley's watch still does service in the teleological argument. The incomprehensibility of God is above reason but not against it, while still we can judge of him neither by our standards of reason nor by our standards of morality, as the laws which govern us do not apply to him (p. 19). Modern science does not exist; acceptance of evolution is referred to contemptuously, and it is categorically affirmed that "there is no evidence that any species has developed by gradual transition out of a lower species" (p. 12). It is in accordance with this type of doctrine that the chief authority for President Patton is Professor Charles Hodge, and that the edition of 1906 still bears the copyright date, 1875.

The same attitude is maintained in a far more elaborate work by President Strong, of the Rochester Theological Seminary. He differs, it is true, on various points like "imputation" from the Princeton view, but the argumentation is of the same character and the two are in the same class. They represent together the instruction given in a majority of American theological seminaries. Our author's *Systematic Theology* appeared in its seventh edition in 1902, and the first volume of the greatly expanded eighth edition bears the date 1907. In the five years Dr. Strong's opinions have been modified at a few points, but the system is scarcely touched. In the seventh edition he accepted the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (p. 82), while he now adopts Wood's theory of

"stratification" (p. 171), but this does not affect the substance of doctrine. "The Bible is the work of one mind." "Not one moral or religious utterance of all these writers has been contradicted or superseded by the utterances of those who have come after, but all together constitute a consistent system" (p. 175). "There are degrees of value but not of inspiration" (p. 220). "We do not admit the existence of scientific error in Scripture" (p. 223). "It may be safely said that science has not yet shown any fairly interpreted passage of Scripture to be untrue" (p. 224). And the same may be said of its history (pp. 226-228); while it is denied that such errors, if they existed, would injure its value as a revelation (p. 228).

These statements carry with them acceptance of the great age of the antediluvians and the flood (p. 229), and stories like those of Samson and Balaam (p. 196). Science and the Bible are "reconciled" in the usual fashion (pp. 223 ff.). We cannot forbear to quote some illustrations from the seventh edition, the corresponding section of the eighth edition not having as yet come into our hands: The Mosaic narrative of creation is "a pictorial-summary interpretation," "a rough sketch of the history of creation, true in all its essential features." It is so given that "it could expand to all the ascertained results of subsequent physical research" (p. 193). So with Genesis 3 1-7: "Its general character [is] not mythical or allegorical, but historical" (p. 302). If we ask how it is then that death was in the world, as geology shows, before the fall, the answer is at hand: "God arranged even the geological history to correspond with the foreseen effect of human apostasy" (p. 353). One admires such powers of argumentation almost more than he does the miracle of an inspiration which so elastically sketches essential features that they can stretch to embrace all possible discoveries. In argument and revelation the human and the divine are in a rare combination, defying all hostile science, a combination which is invincible, and needs only to be supplemented by the author's position that miracle and prophecy constitute an important proof of revelation since some such outward sign seems necessary to secure the recipient against self-deception and to make the revelation authoritative to all (p. 116, last edition).

We respect and admire Aquinas, and we can even understand the attempt of the Roman Church to impose his teaching on the present age. In a fashion one admires the audacity it shows, while recognizing its utter futility. By his authority the Pope may, it is true, silence Modernism in the church; but he cannot extirpate it, nor influence in the smallest degree the great world-movement which it represents. So one may admire the Westminster Assembly of divines, without joining in the notion that their views are sufficient for today. Our Protestant scholastics of the twentieth century are engaged in the same attempt as is the Pope, but without his authority. They stand much nearer to Rome than to distinguished theologians of their own denominations. For example, how can we measure the distance which separates Rochester from Colgate if we are to judge by their theological output, yet both are of the Baptist denomination. The professor of theology in the latter, however, seeks to understand his own time, and he writes for living men.

For Professor Clarke there is no longer any absolute system of theology, for all our truth is relative. "The theology of any age is largely an expression of the Christian experience of that age." "Theology is formed in it as in an atmosphere. The theologies of today are part and product of the Christian life of today. . . . This is why they differ from previous theologies" (p. 19). Thus there is no hard and fast faith once delivered to the saints, nor any revelation which may be—must be—tortured and stretched to meet all contingencies. "Christian Theology is the intellectual treatment of the Christian religion" (p. 6). It is therefore subject to all the limits of intellectual endeavor, and it is also enriched by all the fruits of intellectual achievement. "In order to success in theology, a man should be sensitive to life and able to think in sympathy with the living thought of his time" (p. 57). No scientific knowledge is foreign to him, for he has reverence for all truth. These judgments condemn not only the authors of our first division but most of the voluminous theologies of the past fifty years. It follows naturally that the questions of the origin of the world and of men are not to be settled by learned exegesis of the earlier chapters of Genesis, but by the appropriate sciences (pp. 222-223). For religion is not dependent upon these terms

of origin, while it is apparent that science gives "an evolutionary answer" (p. 224). Coming so far, Doctor Clarke faces fearlessly the critical problems of the Bible, and all questions of date and authorship are left unhesitatingly to the results of scholarly investigation.

That these principles are not carried out in a thorough-going fashion is not to the discredit of Professor Clarke. In the discussion of sin, the third chapter of Genesis still remains, not as history indeed, but "as a strikingly true picture of the real nature of sin and the principle on which it entered to mankind" (p. 241), while the reader may be referred to the discussion of the Trinity (pp. 161-181) and of Christ (pp. 260 ff.) as indicating how far the older categories retain their mastery. Yet even here, how widely different is the spirit, and how constant the effort to realize the truth in the experience and to make the ethical and religious supreme; and what a difference between the robes and harps of President Patton and Professor Clarke's thought of salvation, which is "to be transformed into the likeness of God in Christ"!

Probably no one else has so influenced the evangelical theology of the twentieth century as has Professor Clarke; his spirituality, his ethical soundness, his moderation and self-restraint, his avoidance of current terms applied with little appreciation of their meaning, and his holding fast to the old until assured of the new, have all combined to give him wide influence. For Professor Clarke science is manifestly no longer the hand-maid of theology to be scolded and commanded, but it too is a revelation of God. Reason has come to its full rights. Once the Christian religion entered the domain of reason, the Greek philosophy, as an alien, submitting to its laws and adopting its methods. Naturalized, it modified its adopted home: grown strong at last, it seized the reins of power and ruled; but only to cause constant revolts, as reason could not remain enslaved, and asserted itself, at first in the outer courts, but at last in the centre of imperial power. Natural science, logic, philosophy, and now religion, acknowledge reason as supreme. For Professor Clarke the day of dogmatic authority is ended. It is inevitable that others shall attempt to go farther on the same road.

We turn to the Congregational denomination for our illustration, and find it in *The Realities of Christian Theology*. With Professor Clarke the rights of historical criticism and of science are admitted, but Professor Beckwith is to give us "a fresh interpretation of Christian experience in terms of modern intelligence" (p. vii). In this endeavor two factors are of prime importance, psychology and evolution. "The value of psychology in our discussion is many-sided. In tracing the development of religious beliefs, for instance, it is to be remembered that these have all had a psychological history. They have taken their rise in consciousness and followed a genetic order." "No study is more fascinating, as, indeed, none is more rewarding, than to trace the psychological history of the belief in God, the conception of sacrifice, the notion of sin, and the doctrine of a future life" (p. 5). "The new psychological study of conversion is doing more to reveal its true nature than all other inquiries combined" (p. 9). "The number of adolescent conversions discloses a uniformity of experience which can be accounted for only on the basis of a law of consciousness" (p. 10). But psychology has also its transforming influence on particular doctrines. "All the questions which come up with reference to the development of the kingdom of God on earth, of a so-called probation after death, of a Second Coming, and subjects associated with these in theological discussion, of punishment and blessedness, have been profoundly modified in the precise degree to which the essential laws of the human consciousness have become fully known" (p. 11). Evolution, too, "is to be frankly and heartily accepted as furnishing an interpretative principle to all those events with which theology is concerned." "First, in respect to the world itself." "Secondly, Christianity, both in its origin and in its development, is subject to the same law" (pp. 11-12). We do Professor Beckwith injustice in these quotations, as one should read his entire introduction to see how completely he adopts the modern point of view.

But when we turn to his discussion we are perplexed, for "The traditional order of topics is mainly followed, partly for convenience, and partly because to one who travels through a country it is of less importance by what route he goes than what he sees

on the way" (p. ix). But the route determines the country one travels through and fixes in advance the objects he shall see. The ancient dogmatic order is not of secondary consequence, but belongs to the system; and it leads straight to the heart of the thirteenth century. So after all, in the *Realities of Christian Theology* we have the old questions discussed once more, and in much the old way. It is true that in the doctrine of God we have an interpretation of the origin of the concept of God from a study of comparative religion—a wrong derivation in my judgment, but that does not matter—and then precisely the same list of attributes and the same distinctions as to being, distinctions carried out into full scholasticism in the final chapter on the Trinity. In the discussion of man, also, Genesis reappears; and when one turns to the "last things," it is emphatically not psychology which is predominant. The attempt indeed is foredoomed to failure, for if one is to have a theology with psychology and evolution as guiding principles, it is clear that not only the old order and the old terminology but the old problems are doomed. They arose in different circumstances, they are the product of a different world-view, and they look askew when seen from the standing-ground of modern men.

But are we prepared for such a reconstruction? Philosophical schools are in chaos, and we have only the beginnings of the psychology of religion. Ladd, Höffding, Leuba, and James have given us careful studies; but neither do they agree among themselves, nor would any of them attempt to reconstruct the doctrine of the resurrection or of the second coming of our Lord by the aid of this discipline. Ladd and Höffding show us what religion really is to men who understand psychology; and they by no means find the traditional order of topics convenient, nor do they pass through the same territory or see the same things.

The same thing may be said of evolution, for one does not see its value as a determining principle in a theology which stands by the old categories. They are framed on the principle of *being*, while it adopts the notion of *becoming*. Really to adopt this principle with its consequences, making all knowledge strictly relative, would affect, not the angle at which the old doctrines are

seen, but the foundation principles on which they rest; for the principle of Heraclitus destroys a scholasticism built upon a union of Neoplatonism and thirteenth century Aristotelianism. And, once more, is evolution in a condition to give us a theology? One cannot find so much as an authoritative definition of the word, and Professor Beckwith never tells us what he means by it. In the clash of modern scientific schools one knows no certain ground for the construction of a world-view. In our judgment the application of biological terms to regions where they do not apply, especially to the range of studies roughly grouped under the titles anthropology and sociology, has wrought only injury, and, in particular, the comparative study of religion has suffered. Man's biological development was complete before his religious development began, and a new mythology and a new scholasticism are created when the facts of religious history are forced into an alien framework. But, to do him justice, Professor Beckwith is not open to this charge. His use of these categories is not scientific but rhetorical, and his idea of evolution reminds one not of Darwin or of De Vries, but of a faint shadow of Hegel.

The third book we have chosen to illustrate the effort to bridge the chasm between ancient topics and modern thought is *Christian Theology in Outline*. Its author brings adequate learning to his task, and a clear epistemology which controls his thinking. In this volume is no loose use of terms, but careful definitions formed with equal attention to the past and the present. Every sentence has been studied, and the temptation to a rhetorical use of borrowed terms has not assailed the author.

Professor Brown at the outset discriminates and sets forth his purpose:

I am well aware that there are not a few thoughtful people in our day who, for causes into which it is not necessary here to enter, have moved so far in their sympathies from the historic forms of Christianity that any attempt to relate the living content of our present spiritual life to these forms seems to them misleading, if not disingenuous. I believe that one of the most important problems which face the Christian theologian at the present day is how to present the permanent elements in the Christian message in a form to appeal to those who have thus broken with the past. But, legitimate and fascinating as this attempt may be,

it is not the task proposed in the present book. The public which it addresses consists of those who still feel themselves at home in the Christian church, who value the heritage which has come down to them from the past as a priceless possession, but who do not always see clearly how to relate this treasure to the world of thought in which they are living, and so find themselves in a situation of perplexity, if not of positive distress. To such the reinterpretation of old terms here proposed may serve as a help and not a hindrance, fostering that sense of spiritual unity with the past without which the religious life of the present must necessarily be impoverished.¹

The position has indeed its difficulties, and they are scarcely made less by their recognition; none of our other authors thus far has seen them so clearly. The question for the theologian before all other questions is that of truth, and our first problem is this: Can the "historic forms of Christianity" be rendered into the modern world-view? If not, efforts in this direction seem to partake of *ho-ben*, an expressive Buddhist phrase which means the adoption of forms cast aside by the teacher for himself but used for others for paedagogic purposes. It is perhaps not surprising that our author has been charged by one sharp critic with being disingenuous, while other critics have held that his use of these forms is misleading since he is governed by a thorough-going rationalism. But the charges from the left and right are untrue, as indeed they are untrue for all our mediating theologians. Professor Brown proves by his book that he is sincerely devoted to the terms and forms of historic Christianity; for him they have far more than a paedagogic value, as they represent fundamental and enduring truth. With enthusiasm he receives his precious theological inheritance, and it is not merely for convenience' sake that he adopts the ancient itinerary and travels through the familiar scenes. These are his not only by birthright but by mature reflection and conscious adoption.

Yet the older presuppositions have disappeared; for example, he no longer holds the metaphysics of being, for activity is the category of reality for him, so that a person or a thing is known by its doings. If one would appreciate how far-reaching is this principle, let him read the chapter on the Trinity and compare

¹ Pages viii-ix.

it with the corresponding passages in Clarke and Beckwith. For Brown the triunity is not in the being of God but in the receptivity of our minds, and its truth therefore is found in his manifestation to us; for our knowledge of God, while not of some abstract being, is all the more real on this account. For as the sun has warmth and light as thus we respond to its power, so is God love and righteousness as his presence awakens response in us. Moreover, as we know the sun only through our response, so only do we know God. "The self-revealing God is the real God,—the only God we can or need to know" (p. 161). Here is no misleading use of psychology or of evolution; but the transformation is more thorough-going, since epistemology applies directly to all problems of theology—indeed, for the consistent thinker, as is his epistemology so shall his philosophy and theology be.

Nevertheless, the philosophical interest of the old system reasserts itself: a philosophical trinity is essential, and the doctrine remains as "the most concise and the most comprehensive statement of the Christian faith, gathering into a single phrase all the richness of content which has entered into the thought of God through the Christian experience of redemption" (p. 163). When we ask why this is so, we are told that our reason demands a unified world-view, and that this is met by the philosophical trinity (pp. 159–163). One may question, to begin with, whether any philosophical trinity gives us a unified world-view, however readily we may agree that it gives to us a comprehensive statement of Christian experience. Granted that the intellect demands a unified world-view, ancient dualists and modern pluralists to the contrary notwithstanding, still does it follow that theology must present it, and specifically does the Christian religion present it? And once more, does our modern science make it possible, or is the doctrine of the Trinity adequate to this demand? Modern science may admit monism as a demand of the intellect and accept it as a practical postulate of faith; but the demand can be met only tentatively and hypothetically, and in no sense in some single phrase which shall be accepted as fundamental. For Professor Brown the ancient form clouds the discussion, and leads here and there to unexpected statements; for him in reality, we

take it, this unified world-view is like the possibility of a complete knowledge, it is a *terminus ad quem*.

The same may be said of his discussion of the absolute; the reader must keep Professor Brown's epistemology in mind and all his wits about him or he will be misled. Here again the substance agrees with the epistemology, but the form makes the order wrong, and this tends to leave a false impression on all but the most discerning readers. And once more, in the discussion of God the fitting of the new material into the old forms makes too great demands on the reader, for though the definition of an attribute leaves nothing to be desired if we catch the author's thought, the order of the following discussion takes us to the verge of unreality.

However, it is apparent that the volume meets a genuine need and serves a high purpose; it is a large and increasing class of ministers and laymen who occupy precisely the position Professor Brown has in view. They have not broken with the historic forms of Christianity, and they do breathe the atmosphere of our age. Books like those in our first class present to them a dismal alternative—either they must give up Christianity or they must surrender scientific truth. The encyclical of the Pope puts Catholics into this dilemma, a dilemma the more terrible in proportion to the strength of the love for our religion. Our Protestant scholastics lack the thunders of the papal power, but so far as in them lies they force their readers to the same fatal choice. To all perplexed by the dualistic severance of theology from truth, come the mediating theologians with discernment, learning, religious fervor, and profound truth, showing the way themselves have found to peace. Professors Clarke, Beckwith, and Brown in their several degrees perform this service for the church.

With Professor Brown however the method is at the breaking point; a little larger application and it is shattered. We doubt if more of the new wine could be poured into the old bottles and still both be preserved. It remains for some one to cast the forms themselves wholly aside.

This Professor Foster essays to do in *The Finality of the Christian Religion*. He is to discuss the real problems, and we do not expect him to adopt the old order of topics as a convenience nor

to travel by the old route. Indeed, for him the past has been destroyed like the island of the Malay Archipelago which the explosion on Krakatoa overwhelmed, and for our author no faint sound of church-bells beneath the sea causes even a passing pang of regret.

The book in its greater part is an account of the explosion; from point after point it shows the destructive energy of the seismic force, summing all up in the fifth chapter, *The Changed View of the World and of Life*. But our author is not content with this, but goes on to bring the resources of modern scholarship to bear without reservation upon the gospel narrative itself, and raises the main question, whether there be any permanent in Christianity (p. 10). His argument is not dogmatic but apologetic. Science is knowledge of truth; it is not simply a hypothesis, though hypotheses enter into it; it is not a body of opinion out of which certain opinions may be taken and others left; but it is what we know, and this knowledge differs *toto caelo* from the knowledge of the thirteenth century. For Professor Foster there is no light-hearted acceptance of psychology and evolution as giving our old dogmas in new lights, but a resolute grasp of the facts and an equally resolute rejection of all which is opposed to them.

This is the general impression made by the book and by the earnestness, fearlessness, and industry of its author. For him no difficulty is too small and no discussion too intricate, so that our second impression is that the work is fine-spun and prolix. For example see in Chapter 7 the discussion of the method of historical study: Is it idiographic, or nomothetic, or teleological, or, as the author thinks, a combination of the first two (pp. 303-324)? One may ask indeed for whom was the book written; not, surely, for those whom Professor Brown has in view, for they would be bewildered, offended, and left in suspense; but also surely not for men who have broken with the old forms, since for them the destructive part is a slaying of the dead and the construction is all too slight. It is not for the modern man who doubts the Christian religion, since for him as apologetic it does not enter into the main question at all. It reads like a record of the progress of the author's own convictions, and its value is chiefly for

men passing through the same phases of intellectual experience. How else shall we account for the long chapter on the sources of the life of Christ; for should an author assume that he must say it all, and that his readers have only his book open to them?

Perhaps, after all, the older types still exert their influence, not now as formative, but negatively as worthy of combat. This would account for the fierceness of his onslaught; but positively also they remain as ghosts, forcing him to long engagements with history and with naturalism, until one asks whether the finality of the Christian religion can indeed depend upon these minute discussions and this intricate argumentation. For Christianity was the faith of plain people before it became the prey of scholars; it was a saving power before it became a world-view. The real issue is this, Does Christianity still save? Modern science would be as unconvincing to the world as is theology if it consisted only of its discussions as to atoms and ether and method; but science embodies itself in facts, and forces itself upon our attention as it lights our houses, drives our cars, and revolutionizes our civilization. Real knowledge starts with facts, and to facts it returns, and by facts it is judged.

Professor Foster, it is true, gives us here and there the truth by which he lives, "The veracious self-dependence of love as the kernel and star of the religious life—this is the innermost meaning and message of the Master" (p. 472). Love "has the sublime composure of creative power; it has divine genius and authority. It is this love, *and this alone*, that Jesus says is required of men" (p. 472). Christianity, he tells us, is "the spirit of Christ" (p. 134). "Faith in the divine truth of Christianity is not founded on the bodily resurrection of Jesus, . . . but on its new content, the world of love and grace" (p. 137). So we believe in God, "not on the basis of any external authority whatsoever, but on the basis of our own moral experience" (p. 135); and in Jesus as "reconciler," because "his Spirit dwells in us and fills us with the peace of God" (p. 136).

In general we may say the point of view is Kant's, but filled out and given motive power by the spirit of Jesus. "We are saved, not by ideas, but by ideals. Thus, too, the revelation which Jesus brought is himself; and Kant was right when he said that

there was nothing good in the world save a good will alone" (p. 187). Christianity is "not a religion of facts, but of values; and values are timeless; that is, Christianity is an eternal religion which is *in*, but not *of*, the historical" (p. xiii).

The treatment is incomplete; a second volume is promised in which the constructive will be more evident, and until it appears it is unfair to criticize the present work as more than preparatory, but as such it is representative of much of the work of modern men. They are endlessly patient in details and fearlessly honest; they follow truth wherever it leads them, even though it be to an increasingly thorough destruction, but they are not equally clear in their statements of positive truth, for as yet, we take it, they are not certain as to that saving faith by which men live and for which they would die. Nor, we may add in conclusion, does Professor Foster show upon what terms men who have never held the ancient forms may come to the central message; and this question deserves an answer—whether without the very doctrines he rejects the modern world would have found the truth he holds.

Our survey of these notable books raises once more the question of the possibility of a systematic theology. The old we know. Its great authors had no question as to the truth of its world-view and of its entire accord with Christian facts; but its acceptance in our day is impossible, unless we admit a fundamental dualism of truth, agreeing that what is false in science is true in theology. That cannot be; and as the opposition becomes apparent, men will choose, and not for theology. The crisis is in Protestantism as in Romanism, and its end is easily foreseen.

Then shall we retranslate our terms into modern speech? The attempt is laudable and necessary, it would be unfair to the present as to the past if it were not made. Let the old order and the old forms and the old beliefs be arrayed in the costume of the present. In all seriousness let me repeat how deeply I sympathize with the attempt and how sincerely I could wish it entire success; but to men who have broken with the old forms it looks like a masquerade, ingenious, interesting, but unconvincing, unreal, and ready to disappear at dawn.

On the other hand, we have the philosophy of religion, and we

are told that it will suffice. Its advantages are great; it is of the modern age, whose methods are its own by birthright; it is freed from the trammels of the ancient order of topics and of the ancient material. It need not profess omniscience, but can openly avow that it does not know; but for all it does not give us religion, as it does not profess so to do, and at least it leaves room for the thorough-going treatment of our faith. Religion is a permanent fact, and its greatest expression is Christianity. Religion is in the feelings, veneration, adoration, worship, dependence, trust, and these are called forth by objects we agree to name divine. Religion may be formal, it may be superficial, it may be degrading and degraded, but at its best it is the deepest response of the self to the highest we know. Religion is essentially subjective, and in the self it finds its reality. In all religions a vital experience has been sought for; unfound, religion is only a rite, a creed, a pretence. What then shall call forth the deepest trust and the holiest adoration? Answer, and you describe your God. It is apparent that one has qualifications for theology only as he has the experience. The essence of Christianity will never be discovered by learned discussions, but only by a living faith. What is it that is God to me, to you? This is what we meant by Christianity being a fact, a fact of saving power, a fact for scholar and for boor, a fact of blood-red earnestness, a fact whose everlasting symbol is the Cross. It is this first of all, or it is only an elaborate subject for learned discussion, signifying nothing. What is the significance of this experience, how is it related to Jesus, and finally is it true, not simply as bare fact—this we know—but true as related to the totality of our experience? Was Jesus' trust of the Father justified? Is our trust in the eternal goodness justified? Was Jesus right in his choice of a life-purpose and of the means he adopted to this end, and are we justified in seeking to be of his mind?

Theology can never divorce itself from the quest for truth; it can never permit *ho-ben*, nor can it content itself, like mysticism, with mere experience. Its task is not the ancient one; it no longer takes all knowledge as its field nor has it a list of propositions as unchanging norm. It deals with few topics, but they

the highest. Its task is never finished. In religion man in his deepest experience surrenders himself to the highest he can know. To divine this highest is a limitless task for a widening experience, and glimpses of new truth stir afresh the soul. Old things pass away; all things become new. Only when we know as we are known can we have a theology which shall need no revision; and only when we see face to face, when we enter into full communion with the Father, can we describe the finality of our religion. All else is subordinate, mechanism, metaphysics, history, since to one task and to it alone theology should devote itself. And we still wait for the genius who shall state our fundamental faith in accordance with that insight which the modern man has gained.